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QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[11 March 1998]

GE.98-11021 (E)

Question of the realization of the right to development

1. The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights and the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development were reminders of the vital importance for peoples of the right to development in a context of growing inequality between North and South and within each nation.

2. Over 80 per cent of the world income goes to a mere 20 per cent of the world's population. Never before in history have the planet's masters (transnational industrial and financial groups) been so few or so powerful. Inherent in the globalization of which they are the chief protagonists is yet further concentration of wealth and means for action in the hands of a very small cosmopolitan minority. Inherent in it, too, in the name of pseudo- "progress", are excessive concern with productivity and the spoliation of the resources of the planet and its population.

3. The social divisions engendered by the omnipotence of financial markets capable of destroying frontiers and nations are, in turn, engendering irredentism, rising nationalism, "ethnic cleansing", fundamentalism of all kinds, and the break-up and implosion of formerly unitary States.

4. Speculative economics has destabilized first Mexico and then Asia (especially South Korea and Indonesia). Unemployment and financial deficits have soared; social rights, which were in any event only embryonic, have dwindled and the barely emergent trade-union and political rights have regressed.

5. The right to development enshrined in the international instruments and declarations resulting from the recent United Nations world summits is contradicted by the doctrine of neo-liberalism and the globalization promoted by transnational private interests.

6. The right to development is contradicted by the policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, particularly within structural adjustment plans.

7. The right to development is also contradicted by the principles established by the World Trade Organization and by the draft treaty (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) negotiated in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

8. The genuine realization of the right to development therefore entails a new economic policy and reorientation of the United Nations agencies towards a single aim, social rights, as provided for in, for example, the Commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development.

9. In an international "community" where 4.5-5 billion people are still in need and the wealth of the 358 richest individuals (dollar billionaires) exceeds the combined annual income of 45 per cent of the poorest members, i.e. 2.6 billion people, promotion of the right to development is indissociable from the advancement of human rights in general.

10. Placing of the struggle for human rights in the overall social and economic context and identification of the real obstacles to the right to development are fundamental prerequisites for the effective promotion of human rights and the rights of peoples.

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